

THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST

The Outward Bound Trust is an educational charity that uses the outdoors to develop self-belief, resilience, social competence, and a respect for the natural environment. Their Scottish base is at [Loch Eil](#) about 4 miles west of Fort William where they employ about 50 staff.

As the country entered lockdown at the end of March Outward Bound ceased delivering their normal courses and actively explored how their staff and centre could support the reopening of schools in Fort William and the wider Lochaber area.



THE OFFER

The offer from Outward Bound ranges from delivering learning experiences in school grounds and nearby local green spaces to experiences more akin to 'normal' Outward Bound. The centres use their estate and other nearby resources to support this. Outward Bound staff work closely with local schools to build the capacity of teachers to support outdoor learning in their own contexts.

Our People

Outward Bound instructors are all trained, qualified, and experienced educators who build positive relationships with young people of all ages and all backgrounds. Their day to day focus is delivering key personal and social outcomes that enable young people to successfully navigate their childhood and adolescence and make a positive transition into adulthood. In addition, the centre is also exploring ways in which other staff, in administration & facilities, catering and cleaning, can also be made available to support schools.

Some initial ideas include:

- Deployed staff into local establishments, as teaching assistants, break & lunch duty supervisors, after-school activity assistants, or to support the timetabled PE provision with outdoor adventure activity.
- Facilitating personal and team development outdoor activities that can be delivered in the school grounds and locally.
- Outward Bound Instructors supporting small groups of learners to walk, canoe, climb and row, on either timetabled day release or as part of the PE curriculum.
- Supporting outdoor environmental education and Learning for Sustainability through the John Muir Award & the Duke of Edinburgh Award.
- Delivering a five day, non-residential, Outward Bound course, during the school day, from local school but with access to the local wilderness.

Our Places

The Outward Bound team are skilled in using the outdoor space around Fort William as their classroom, from the Caledonian Canal, River Lochy, Glen Nevis, to the lochs and mountains. The centre's estate, four miles from Corpach, has extensive grounds for outdoor learning, orienteering, bush craft, wilderness cooking, challenge tasks, and with the equipment store to enable adventures to happen. The centre can also be used as an indoor and classroom space.

Our Process

Outward Bound staff are experiential outdoor educators by trade, who use a mixture of instructional coaching, facilitation and youthwork pedagogy. Staff are skilled at developing rapport with young people, developing confidence, hope, optimism and wellbeing.



When COVID lockdown was introduced in March, many of Blairvadach's school bookings were cancelled. However, the centre recognised the possibilities for outdoor learning to play a strong role in the education recovery programme.

Its existing programmes were quickly repurposed to:

1. Deliver outdoor learning in the 'Hub Schools' to the children of key workers and most vulnerable.
2. Develop an online outdoor learning programme which was used as a home learning resource: <https://www.blairvadach.org.uk/Pages/View/22> . To date, this resource has been downloaded 30,000 times.
3. Create orienteering maps for all school grounds in Glasgow City Council and a resource pack for teachers: <https://www.blairvadach.org.uk/Pages/View/23> These types of resources have proved invaluable for teachers who are being encouraged to take their learning outdoors whenever possible.
4. Create an online course to assist teachers who were new to taking their learning outdoors. This course is an online module which gives practical advice for taking the curriculum outdoors and how to operate in a COVID safe way. A video of this course can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/q2gtKmwzqPc>.
5. Work in partnership with Glasgow City Council Social Work to support young people in the care system. This facilitated getting young people out of their normal environment, to work on a Personal and Social Development Programme using different outdoor activities as the vehicle. This programme proved hugely successful for the mental wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable young people in society.
6. Develop an alternative to residential experiences. Each school that has booked can now experience a week-long blended outdoor education experience based in their school, local park and two days at the outdoor education centre. This progressive course focuses on resilience, team work and behaviour as part of GCCs Education Recovery Programme.
7. Create a '30 Day Outdoor Learning Challenge'. This resource is aimed at Glasgow Schools but is open to all online. Each day, for 30 days a new curriculum based outdoor learning challenge is released alongside a resource card and video. There are currently hundreds of schools accessing the resource to enhance the in school learning. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ediRQiKsc_8
8. Embed instructors in schools to assist with taking learning outdoors, in the playground and local parks. We also operate a site within Glasgow which delivers week long John Muir Award programmes focussing on conservation and environmental studies through the vehicle of watersports.



Blairvadach is a local authority outdoor education centre and charges for all of its services to schools. The demand for the service remains very high (even in the COVID crisis) and each facility is full. The centre has continued to operate throughout the COVID 19 crisis within the national scientific guidance to support the young people of Glasgow.